

# REASONS

Humbly Offered For

Buying *and* Selling

1608/1673.

IN THE

A R M Y.

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IN A

L E T T E R

TO THE

SECRETARY at W A R.

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L O N D O N :

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S E C R E T A R Y G E N E R A L







TO THE  
*Hon<sup>ble</sup>.* Henry Pelham, Esq;

His MAJESTY'S  
SECRETARY at WAR.

SIR,



It is to You, as Patron of the Army, that these few Reasons laid down in the following Pages, are address'd, by a faithful Servant of His Majesty King GEORGE, a True Lover of his Country, and a Well-wisher to the Gentlemen of the Army: And it is humbly hoped, That if they be found, on Perusal, to have Weight with you, you will be pleas'd to contribute your Endeavours to remedy the Inconveniencies complained of, by proper Representations to the Best of Princes, whose Royal Indulgence is in every Regard so conspicuous, that the Grievance of the meanest Subject, need but to be known, in order to be redress'd.

Many People have pass'd their Opinions on the Practice of Buying and Selling Commissions in the Army!

Army: Some exclaim against it, who, having little Concern in the Matter, give themselves no Leisure to discuss the good or ill Consequences of it, and are principally pleas'd with the Restraint, because it is a new Thing.

Others, believing themselves concern'd in Interest, and that they shall sooner be advanc'd, if no Persons be permitted to purchase over their Heads, as they call it, rejoice at the Restraint; without considering, that they themselves, if they live long enough, may find it to be their own Misfortune to be deny'd Leave, when worn out with Age and Infirmities, to retire, with a Provision in their Pockets, to carry them through the last Stages of a declining Life, or to leave some comfortable Subsistence to their Families, which otherwise must, probably, be left intirely destitute and unprovided for.

Another Sort of People, who, on all Occasions, have express'd a Disaffection to His Majesty's Person and Government, clamour against Buying and Selling, being pleas'd with the Hardships which those Gentlemen suffer thereby, who have so successfully contributed to baffle their seditious Attempts.

But there is still a Fourth Set of People, who, from honest and well-meaning Motives, are averse to Buying and Selling, and think it of very pernicious Consequence; and that, principally, for the following Reasons; *viz.*

I. Because they think it is a great Discouragement to His Majesty's Service.

II. That the Nation in general is prejudiced thereby.

III. That





III. That it is a particular Injury to the Officers on the Establishment of Half-Pay, who have served Abroad in the late Wars.

These Objections, Sir, which, if well founded, are certainly of great Weight, I shall take upon me particularly to answer, with all the Candor and Plainness of a well-meaning and disinterested Person, and shall submit the Whole to your favourable Consideration.

As to the First Objection, *That Buying and Selling would be a Discouragement to his Majesty's Service*; I believe it will be allowed by those who inveigh most against this Practice, That such Gentlemen as are desirous to lay out their Fortunes this Way, or their Friends for them, must be inviolably attach'd to His Majesty's Person and Government, (to which they are more particularly bound, than other Subjects, by the Duty of their Posts) since they are willing to stake down their whole Fortunes, and their Hopes of future Subsistence, as well as Promotion, as a farther Security (as it is certainly the strongest that can be requir'd) for their Fidelity and Integrity: And since there is no Provision made for Officers who have served long in the Army, and who, perhaps, by Wounds receiv'd, or Infirmities contracted in the Time of their Service abroad, or by Age, or Casualty, are become incapable, or unfit to perform their Duties, it is strange to hear it asserted, That it would be a Discouragement to His Majesty's Service to allow such unhappy Gentlemen to sell their Posts, and to retire from a Duty they are not able to perform, when the small Sum of Money for which they may sell, will support them, with Ease of Body,

and Satisfaction of Mind, to the winding up of a painful and fatiguing Life, and, perhaps, enable them to put their Families into some small Way of Subsistence after they themselves are no more.

Every Officer who has served long, would, doubtless, be glad, for these moving Considerations, to have it in his Power to dispose of his Post, and answer these good Ends, with Regard to himself and his Family: And, on the other Side, how can His Majesty's Service suffer by these superannuated or infirm Gentlemens disposing of their Commissions in Favour of Persons who are younger, and consequently more fit for Service?

This, Sir, is a demonstrable Truth, That the Officers of the Army, as it now stands, and as it stood both before and since His Majesty's happy Accession, have most of them purchas'd, in one Capacity or other; and as it must be confess'd, That they have served faithfully (some of them as long as they are able to serve) how can the Service receive Detriment by these Gentlemens selling, in their Turns, to others of more Vigor, those very Commissions, which they, perhaps, bought in the same Manner in their more youthful Days?

I know it has been insinuated, That the Practice of Buying and Selling is an Hinderance to *Merit*, because the next Person in Succession to a Post, may be set aside for want of Money, and a younger Officer, who is better befriended by Fortune, may be put over his Head. But this, Sir, has very seldom been the Case, because, either the Friends of such next Officer have supply'd him, or his Credit has pass'd to supply the Deficiency; or, as has often been the Case, the Officers in the same Regiment under him, have contributed to make up the



the Sum for his Benefit, (that they themselves might not stop, but keep Promotion on the Wheel.

(It is farthermore to be consider'd, That if Buying and Selling be totally disallow'd, the Sons of many Noble Families, and Persons of Distinction and Fortune (whose Inclinations frequently take a Bent that Way) will be hinder'd from coming into the Army; who otherwise might have an Opportunity to rise early to Preferments, and be encouraged to qualify themselves in the vigorous Time of Life (a Time principally fit for those Employments) for considerable Preferment; that so, on requisite Occasions, we might have an Army Officer'd by Persons whose Birth and Condition might adorn their Posts, and who, at the same Time, would be animated with Strength and Vigor of Mind and Body, to do the Service expected and required from them.

To conclude this Point; Of the many Cases that I could enumerate to prove, that Buying and Selling is no Discouragement to His Majesty's Service, and that the Restraint in this Case is a Hardship to many loyal Subjects, I shall mention but this one.—In the latter Years of the late Reign, when Parties ran high, and Persons then in Power dar'd to form dangerous Schemes, and by garbling the Army, and other Methods, left no Room to doubt of their Designs to set aside the Protestant Succession, and enslave their Country: And when, by His Majesty's happy and seasonable Accession, those Designs were blasted, many experienc'd Officers being of Opinion, that their Services might soon be requir'd, and their Hearts being warm with Zeal for their Country's Good, did, at that *Crisis* of Time, lay out their whole Fortunes (after having served Twenty Years, and upwards,

upwards, in the late Wars), and stripp'd their Families naked, to purchase better Posts (of several Persons who, at that Time, quitted the Service) that so they might be enabled the better to serve their King and Country: And now, since we are bless'd with happy Days of Peace, their Services being over, and Age coming on apace, would it not be hard to deny these Gentlemen the Benefit of retiring from the Fatigues of an active Life, or of reimbursing themselves of what they so freely stripped their Families of, to serve their King and Country, that so they might make a suitable Provision for the Remainder of their Days, and their Families after them, in order to prevent their becoming Beggars to the Crown for Pensions for Subsistence?

This Case, Sir, I doubt not but you are affected with; and whenever it may be presented to you, will be pleased to give it your Assistance: For if a General Restraint be laid on Buying and Selling, particular Cases will be now and then presenting themselves, which may require Consideration and Relief.

As to the Second Point, *That the Practice of Buying and Selling is prejudicial to the Nation in General;* I cannot see how the Nation can suffer, by an Officer's disposing of his Post, when, by long Service, Age, or other Infirmities, he may be disabled from doing the Duties of it; especially as he quits his Post in Favour of a Purchaser, whose Youth and Vigor will enable him to supply all his Defects. The Case is only, with Regard to the Nation, Whether *this* or *that* Man commands a Troop of Horse, or Company of Foot, and so long as the Duty of the Captain is duly performed, it must be the same Thing to the Publick.



me Leave, Sir, to observe in this Place, that it is, in all other Cases, the common Right of an *Englishman*, who purchases a Place of Business or Trade, to have the Option of selling again whenever he is so disposed; and it is very hard if the Officers of the Army, who have always distinguished themselves by their Zeal, and steady Adherence to His Majesty's Service, should find themselves in a worse Situation in this respect, than any other of the King's Subjects; and more especially with Regard to those Gentlemen, who themselves bought their Commissions, and, perhaps, exhausted their whole Fortunes in the Purchase.

I remember, that some Years ago, I think it was about the Year 1695, a Restraint was laid upon this Practice, by a Clause in the Act for punishing Mutiny and Desertion; and every Commission Officer, was oblig'd at his first Muster, or at the Entry of his Commission with the Commissary, to take an Oath, "That he did not give any Money for his Commission; And, that no one else, did, directly, or indirectly, give any for him." But this Restraint did not continue long; for King WILLIAM, of Glorious Memory, who had certainly the Interest of his People as much at Heart, as ever any Prince had, who, before him, fill'd the *English* Throne, quickly found the Inconvenience of it; and it was enforced no longer by the Act, than for one Year; and then that Excellent Prince allow'd again of the Practice, tho' in a Time of War: And several Gentlemen, now in great Commands, purchased at that very Time, who must have wanted a great deal of the Rank which they now adorn, had they been oblig'd to attend the common Course of Succession: And this, Sir, has been so far from being a Prejudice

to the Publick, that the Nation has reap'd the Benefit of the early Service of many Gallant Commanders, who, to the Glory of their Country, have distinguish'd themselves through all Europe, by their Courage and Conduct.

As to the Third Objection, Of the particular Injury the Practice of Buying and Selling would be to the Officers on the Establishment of Half-Pay, who have served abroad in the late Wars, I doubt not to make it evident to all indifferent Persons, that it would not be such an Injury in this Respect, as it may, at first View, appear to be.

I must acknowledge, That it would be particularly hard on those Gentlemen, who have born so great a Share of the Fatigue in the Two last Wars, and who have merited so greatly of their Country, by their gallant Behaviour in the Defence of it, if they should be set aside, and Persons who never served, be allow'd to fill those Vacancies, to which they have so just a Claim, and to which the Parliament have generously been pleased to recommend them. This, I say, would be a very hard Case; and I cannot forbear saying, on this Head, That if the Gentlemen who formerly presided in the War-Office, had regularly supply'd the Vacancies in the Standing Forces in Favour of these Gentlemen, it would have made a great Difference in the Estimate laid before the Honourable House of Commons, for providing for the Half-Pay, both of the Land Forces and Marines. But as it is not the Business of these Pages to enter into these Enquiries, I shall decline the same, and proceed to the Question in Hand.

I have already observed, That a Gentleman's purchasing a Commission, is only one Man being put into the Room of another: This Doth no Half Pay



Pay Officer can expect, or have any Pretensions to, except in Case of a Vacancy by Death, &c. and as the Life of Man is uncertain, it is very possible, the resigning Person may live as long, or longer, than the Person who purchases. As, therefore, no Half-Pay Officer can have any Claim, except in Cases of Vacancy by Death or Misbehaviour, so have those Gentlemen received no Detriment, except when those Posts have been disposed of in Favour of Persons not on the Half-Pay List; and this has been not only a particular Injury to every single Officer of the same Rank on that List, who otherwise had a Chance to succeed to the vacant Post, but to the whole Body of Gentlemen on that Establishment, because it is putting by the Parliamentary Recommendation in their Favour.

But, to prevent my being misunderstood, it is necessary, before I proceed farther, to observe, That I would not that my Meaning should be construed to extend so far, as that the Buying and Selling of Commissions should become a Trade, and Jobb'd from one Hand to another, purely to gratify the Avarice of designing Persons. No, Sir, this is far from my Intention or Desire: I only argue, that the Practice of Buying and Selling may prevail, as it has, 'till very lately, done, in Favour of such Officers as have been long in the Service, and for such as by Sickness or Misfortune may be render'd unfit for, or incapable of performing their Duty; and that on this single Motive, *viz.* That such a License will be a great Encouragement, as well to the Gentlemen already in the Service, as to such whose Inclinations may lead them to the Army; since they will be thereby at Liberty to retire, with the Assurance of a comfortable

portable Subsistence, or what may purchase for them the ~~Advantage~~ of such a Subsistence, when they shall grow old in their Country's Service, or be otherwise disabled by Misfortunes or Casualties, from attending the Duties of their Posts. And on this Score, such License, I hope, will be very far from being thought unreasonable or pernicious, either to his Majesty's Service, or to the Merit of particular Persons.

To corroborate still farther the Arguments I have laid down in Favour of this Practice, we need but look back on the Behaviour of the Gentlemen who served Abroad so many Campaigns in the last War, under the Great Duke of MARLBOROUGH, when the Practice of Buying and Selling most prevail'd. The wise and good Conduct of that Great General, no doubt, was the main Spring, under God, from whence issued the many Glorious Successes which follow'd the *British* Arms, in the last War: But, nevertheless, the Duke himself always ascribed those Successes to the Goodness of the Troops of the different Nations, under his Command, who all of them behav'd with very great Bravery: But, in particular, the *English* Troops, whenever, or on whatever Occasions they were employ'd, were always acknowledg'd to act with superior Bravery and Courage; and this Honour has been allow'd to them, not only by their own General Officers, but by the Commanders of the Troops of Foreign Nations in Alliance with us.

Now I would fain know, How this superior Bravery of the *English* Troops can be so well accounted for, any other Way, than by their being Officer'd by sprightly brave young Men, who, in the Prime and Flower of their Strength, arriv'd

at



at considerable Commands, and were animated by a Noble Emulation for the Glory of their Country, both to *resolve* and *execute*, with an Intrepidity surpassing the Phlegmatick Precaution, and doubting Activity natural to old Age, which must, generally speaking, be the Circumstance of most of those Officers who fill great Commands, by a gradual Rise through the several subaltern, and other Posts, which they must necessarily pass thro' to obtain them; and who these gallant Men were, I make no doubt, will be found, upon Enquiry, to be chiefly such as purchas'd their Commissions: And, indeed, it is natural to suppose, That these young Gentlemen, who come so determin'd to the Military Life, as to lay out considerable Fortunes to acquire Honour, will be sure to exert themselves, and act with a Vigor and Resolution, much superior to those, who by long and painful Services in inferior Posts, shall not arrive at any considerable Command, 'till 'tis Time for them to quit the Service intirely, and give up a Life of Fatigue and Difficulty, to that Rest and Tranquility, which should be a preparative State of Mind for a better.

'Twill, perhaps, be objected, That what these old Officers want in Vigor and Resolution, they have in Experience and Judgment: But to this I answer, The Art of War is not so very difficult, but that a brave young Man, of an enterprizing Genius, full of Life and Fire, may soon arrive to a great Degree of Perfection in it, if he bends his Mind to the Study of it. And I think nothing can be more demonstrable, than the Advantage that must necessarily accrew from brave young Gentlemen constantly recruiting an Army, by purchasing into Regiments of Horse and Foot, in the Room of Gentlemen worn-out in the Service;

and especially when, by the very Terms of their Purchase, their Fortunes, and future Means of Subsistence, are directly staked as Pledges for their faithful Services, and loyal Intentions. To such as these, I may be bold to say, were mainly owing the many glorious Victories and unparallel'd Successes gained in the late War, to the Glory of the *British* Nation; and which, we dare affirm, humanly speaking, would be equall'd, on future Occasions, were the same Practice restor'd which then generally obtain'd.

There is still another Argument worthy of Consideration, that may be urged in Favour of Buying and Selling Commissions in the Army; Which is, That with regard to our neighbouring Nations, where this Practice is disallow'd, a Prince or State has it not regularly in his or their Power to reward any eminent Merit in the Military Way, without disobliging Numbers of their Officers, over whose Heads such a Person may be promoted. For the next Officer in Succession will be disoblig'd of Course to be post-pon'd, and the whole Corps will be disgusted to have a Stranger, contrary to their usual Forms and Customs (by which only they themselves can hope to rise) put over their Heads; and People must, under such Circumstances, behave with a very ill Grace, and, doubtless, could they meet with equal Preferment, would rather serve any where else.

Far otherwise was the Case with us, when Buying and Selling were allow'd. It was easy then to provide for Persons of Distinction, without doing any Detriment to the Service by discontenting the Officers of the Army, because 'twas more than probable, that Purchases and Purchasers, might



might be found to make all Parties easy : And an Officer who, thought himself injur'd in that Respect, had nothing to do but to sell in his Turn, and, perhaps, by a small Addition, he might purchase a superior Post in another Regiment.

After all, Sir, if a Restraint must remain upon the Buying and Selling of Commissions, and the present Officers of the Army, who most of them purchas'd their Posts, must be oblig'd to die in them, and so lose all the Benefit of those Purchases, which they had, perhaps, stripp'd themselves and Families naked, to buy ; and which was an allow'd Practice in the Reigns of their late Majesties King WILLIAM and Queen ANNE, and continued down to the Reign of his present Majesty King GEORGE, 'till very lately : If this be the Case, I must presume to say, That the ~~Old~~ Officers of the Army, who have signalized themselves in the Service of their King and Country, are the only unhappy People under His Majesty's Auspicious Government ; and they must make themselves as easy as possible under the melancholy Reflections and Apprehensions of leaving their Families naked and destitute when they die, and subjected to the most abject Necessities of Life. A Reflection the most shocking of all others to a generous and compassionate Nature ! and which alone, on the Approach of heavy old Age, or the Attacks of Bodily Infirmities, is sufficient to extinguish the vital Lamp, and put an End to that Life, whose Preservation is at once the only Hopes, and the only Subsistence of his Family !

But far better Things are to be hoped for from His most Gracious Majesty's Indulgence and Goodness (so conspicuous in every Action of His Royal Life !) and 'tis certainly for want of a Friend only,

to lay their Case before their Royal Master, that  
 any, even the meanest of His Majesty's Subjects,  
 can remain an Hour unhappy: It is therefore, now  
 humbly submitted to You, SIR, to be that Friend  
 to so many Loyal and Faithful Subjects, if the  
 Reasons here humbly and plainly offer'd, appear  
 to have any Weight; And certainly a more pro-  
 per, or better qualify'd Patron, could not be wish'd,  
 as well from the Nature of the Employment you  
 so worthily bear, as from the Knowledge the Per-  
 son has, who tenders You this, That it is inherent  
 in the Noble Family from whence You sprung, to  
 delight in doing Good; And who is, Sir, with the  
 greatest Respect,

*Your most Humble and Obedient*

*Servant to Command, &c.*

**F I N I S.**





